



A LETTER
TO THE REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.
ON THE POSITION WHICH HE HAS
TAKEN IN THE PRESENT
CRISIS.

BY WILLIAM DODSWORTH, M.A.



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A LETTER, &c.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AFTER the long friendship which has subsisted between us, and which I hope will long continue to subsist with undiminished force, it is a painful necessity indeed which obliges me to enter into personal controversy with you. Yet I am sure I shall have your assent to the position, that where the interests of TRUTH are concerned all other considerations must give way ; nay more, that whatever is worth preserving in human friendship will be promoted and fostered by our holding those interests to be paramount.

In your recent book on "The Royal Supremacy" you have devoted part of a postscript to strictures upon a sermon of mine on "Holy Baptism," in which I had felt it a duty to allude in terms of dissatisfaction to the course taken by you and some others in reference to the present crisis in church matters. In order to make clear the point of difference between us it may be needful briefly to advert to the circumstances out of which it has arisen.

The doctrine of Holy Baptism may be truly said to be the very keystone of the whole system of sacramental grace. The whole Church system depends upon it ; and pre-eminently the true doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. Hence it is almost impossible to

exaggerate the importance of the issues which have been at stake in the late ecclesiastical suit on the subject of baptism. This was especially so in the eyes of high-churchmen, because it was felt, whether justly or not, that the formularies of the Church of England were not so distinct and unequivocal on the whole subject of sacramental grace as might be wished. It is only necessary here to refer to the doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. On the other hand, it has always been felt that the doctrine of Baptism was the strong ground of the Church of England. It might seem impossible to deny that in this point at least the Church of England was entirely catholic.

It seemed to many, then, that it was in the good providence of God that the contest for the doctrines of sacramental grace was to be fought on ground the most favourable for us; and much seemed to depend upon the issue of the conflict. If the true doctrine of Baptism had been affirmed to be the exclusive doctrine of the Church of England, it would have laid the foundation for a further developement in the same direction. If, on the other hand (as we have lived to see), the doctrine of baptismal grace were denied to be the exclusive doctrine of the Church of England, our whole ground on which we claim to be catholic, and to hold catholic truth, seemed to be cut from under us. For, if after a full and fair discussion of the question it is decided that the Church of England holds no distinct doctrine on the grace of baptism, how could we hope that it could be successfully contended that she is catholic on any one single doctrine? As was truly said by the

bishop of Exeter's counsel before the Judicial Committee, "If the Church of England does not hold the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, it will be impossible to say that she holds any doctrine at all."

Such was felt to be the issue hanging upon this decision. At length the decision was given. One more fatal to the maintenance of high-church doctrine in the Church of England could scarcely have been devised. It reversed the judgment in the Court of Arches; it required Mr. Gorham to be instituted to the cure of souls; and it did this in language identical with that which has been held by the low-church party; asserting the Articles to be justly open to their view, and that the strong language of the formularies may rightly be understood in a charitable or hypothetical sense.

What, then, might have been expected from persons of high-church principles when this judgment was delivered? Surely that they would with entire unanimity insist upon a synodical assertion of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. I omit for the present all reference to the mode in which this assertion might be obtained and applied. But surely it was reasonable to expect that this, and nothing short of this, would have been felt to be *the* remedy required: and that churchmen alive to the great importance, or rather the essential necessity, of the doctrines of sacramental grace, would never have rested satisfied until such a measure was obtained as should not leave even the *shadow of a doubt* upon the doctrine of baptism as held by the Church of England.

And I must say (what from being on the scene

of action, and mixing much with other clergymen then in London, I may be qualified to say), that such seemed at first to be the conviction generally felt by high-churchmen. There was an almost universal feeling amongst them that the judgment was much worse for our side of the question than could have been anticipated; and that nothing but the most decisive measures would suffice to deliver us from the evils of it.

Such was the state of things when you told us that you had discovered, with a skill surely most unhappily applied, that the sentence was so worded that no other doctrine was impugned by it than simply the doctrine "that original sin is remitted to all infants in and by the grace of baptism." I cannot but believe that if almost any one except yourself had come forward with such a statement, it would have been instantly put aside as unworthy of consideration. Coming from you, it was listened to with that respect which is no more than your due. And when once put out, no doubt it was caught at by many who perhaps from an undue amiability of temperament are always glad to escape from conflict; or by others who from a natural love of ease shrink from any course which presents great difficulties. But I must express my decided belief that no one who has examined the matter for himself will venture to say that the only doctrine, or portion of a doctrine, impugned by this judgment is, *that original sin is remitted to all infants in and by the grace of baptism.*

In your recent publication, p. 226, you challenge me to show that more than this has been denied.

Permit me to say that you have not answered the arguments already urged by me in "The Gorham Case, &c." In p. 12, I put the case of a clergyman applying for institution, and saying that he adopts the doctrine of Mr. Gorham's book as his own doctrine, and I asked, Could a bishop now legally refuse institution in such a case? Obviously not.

Yet you will not say that Mr. Gorham, in that book, does not deny the whole doctrine of baptismal grace. He avowedly reduces the sacrament to a mere sign. Mr. Badeley forcibly argued, that even where he admitted that regeneration might be *in* baptism, that is, imparted simultaneously with the administration of the rite, yet he denied that it could be *by* baptism. The bishop of London assigns as one of his reasons for not concurring in the judgment, that "Mr. Gorham holds that remission of original sin, adoption into the family of God, and regeneration, must all take place, in the case of infants, not in baptism, nor by means of baptism, but before baptism—an opinion which appears to me," the Bishop continues, "to be in direct opposition to the plain teaching of the Church, *and utterly to destroy the sacramental character of baptism.*" [Bishop of London's answer to the Scotch bishops.]

In like manner, the bishop of Bath and Wells (the only other bishop who has yet spoken), says, "a doubt has been cast by the said decision upon the teaching of the catechism of the Church of England, that all infants are made members of Christ, [the] children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, in and by their baptism."

The judgment, then, of two of our bishops is de-

cidedly against your interpretation of the decision. And I must think that this is the judgment of reason and common sense. Can you really think that this decision only authorises Mr. Gorham so far to deviate from the doctrine of the Church, as to teach that *remission of sin* is not necessarily given to *all* infants in their baptism?

You exhort me to “examine with patience—not what popular report, or the outcry of the triumphant, or the fears of the depressed, or the news of the day, state to be the effect of the late judgment; nor even what a cursory inspection of that judgment might suggest; but what, on mature weighing of its words, it shall be made plain that it involves.” p. 226.

But you have left out here one party which I am bound most of all to consider—I mean, my parishioners; those for whose souls I am set to watch, nay, and the whole congregation of Christ’s people also. I must say it matters comparatively little what you, in your cloistered retirement, by dint of study and “mature weighing of words,” can make of the judgment, which you admit to be “very involved and obscure.” I am bound, and I think you also are bound, to consider what will be its *popular* effect,—how it will influence Christian *people*. For whom else are we to labour? Ought it not to be a *first* consideration, what effect this judgment will have on *their* minds,—what meaning it will convey to them? And if this be a false one, the plainest Christian charity requires that we vindicate in their behalf the whole truth, to the extent to which they may reasonably feel it to be impugned.

Our people are not all lawyers; they are not all

casuists, they are not all capable of splitting hairs, and drawing these very nice distinctions. They look at these matters in a broad, common sense way ; and I should imagine that few things would tend more to destroy, and justly to destroy, their confidence in their pastor, than that they should be so dealt with as in effect to be told, in reference to this matter, "Don't think Baptismal Regeneration is called in question by these proceedings. It is only the doctrine of the remission of original sin to all baptized infants which is impugned." Surely this, even if it were true in the letter, would be utterly unreal and unpractical in the spirit. Thus I answer your challenge ; first, by denying *the fact* which you assume ; and, secondly, by saying, that, even if it were a fact, it would not justify the course which you recommend.

And here I must say, that in your zeal to keep within the pale of the Church those of whom you hope well, notwithstanding the heterodoxy of their opinions, you seem to forget that the whole controversy has reference to the *teachers* of religion, and institution *to the cure of souls*. We may not "do evil that good may come ;" and it surely is evil that we should advocate the admission of those to the cure of souls who deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. You hope that in time they will be brought to a more orthodox faith on this point. But in the mean while, what is to become of the souls which they are leading astray by the denial of this fundamental doctrine ? For this denial is not, as you say, a mere "breach in the wall," but an undermining of its very foundations.

You insist much upon the position that "if this one breach (as you term it) be repaired, everything else is as before; the whole wall stands safe. If," you say, "the Church declares that original sin, instead of being a hindrance to the right reception of baptism, is, as the creed teaches, remitted by it, the whole doctrine of Baptism is at once recovered." This I must emphatically deny. Even if the case were as you singularly, and, I must venture to say, erroneously, suppose, that no more than this were impugned, the reaffirmation of that one point would not leave things as they were before. If any defence has been proved to be weak,—if any article of the faith has been brought into doubt or question,—it is surely the duty of the Church to try to make the defence more secure, and to prevent any future mistake on a vital matter which affects the salvation of souls. Now, here it is impossible to deny that the defences of the Church of England have been proved too weak,—that the language of its Articles is not sufficiently definite and precise. Otherwise it could not have been that five most eminent judges and two archbishops should have concurred in the judgment which has been delivered. Faithfulness, then, requires that we should now put this matter beyond dispute. The Church in earlier days acted by this rule. After the Arian heresy had gained a footing, the Church did not think it sufficient to assert in the gentlest and barest terms the doctrine impugned; but it elaborated statements so full, so exact, so impossible to be mistaken, that the whole doctrine which had been assailed was henceforth placed on an immoveable foundation. All we ask, then, is, that in the holy doctrine now impugned, we should be

allowed to do for ourselves and for our children, that which our fathers did for us.

And now I must notice one or two points in your reply to archdeacon Hare, contained in the same postscript. P. 249, you say, in reference to the Resolutions signed by Archdeacon Manning and others, that "the words conscious, wilful, and deliberate," were carefully inserted in order "*to exclude the thought* that the Church of England had already cut itself off from the Body of Christ." I am very sorry that you should so entirely have forgotten what passed at the drawing up of those Resolutions.

So far from your statement being correct, I think, on reflection, you will remember that the first Resolution was expressly worded as it is, in order to leave that point *open*, which you say was *excluded* by the subsequent Resolution. There were some amongst us who had great misgivings as to how far the Church of England is already committed. Others, like yourself, were more confident on that point. And hence the first Resolution was carefully worded so as to leave that question open. Thus; Resolved, "1. That whatever, *at the present time*, be the force of the sentence," (the point on which we might differ,) "*the Church of England will eventually be bound by the said sentence*, unless, &c." (the point on which we were all agreed). The words referred to by you were inserted, as I understood, for a very different purpose; namely, in order that, without deciding anything as to the *present* effect of the decision, we might restrict our *positive assertion* to the case of "conscious, wilful, and deliberate" abandonment. You will remember that the American Church was mentioned as possibly furnishing an instance of aban-

donment of the truth which might not be wilful. And again, it was observed that the occasion did not require us to pass any judgment on an abstract and hypothetical case involving no conscious or wilful act.

In p. 252, I deeply grieve to find you expressing agreement with archdeacon Hare in the following (to say the least) very questionable passage, where he says that he hopes "care will be taken to clear up the ambiguous meaning of the word Regeneration, and to declare that, in its ecclesiastical sense, it is in no way to be understood as identical with, or interfering with, or precluding the necessity of, conversion; which requires a conscious responsible subject, and is necessary, through the frailty of our nature, in all, at a later period of life." It is true that you qualify your agreement with this passage, by saying that you do not understand archdeacon Hare to mean that "sudden" conversion is necessary in all cases. And perhaps this qualification might have sufficed to prevent the inference that any disparagement to the grace of Holy Baptism could be intended or allowed, if it were not for the following passage, p. 258, which must be taken as a comment upon it. You suggest that "some such statement" as the following might be received by those who doubt, in *their* sense, about admitting the baptismal regeneration of all infants: "By the Sacrament of Baptism all infants are incorporated into Christ, and through His most precious merits receive remission of original sin, as also that infused divine virtue of the Holy Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of

life. Yet this regenerating grace, although sufficient for their salvation as infants, *doth not suffice for them as adults, unless, through the continual grace of God,* they with their whole hearts turn to the Lord their God, and cleave to Him, and abide in that conversion to Him unto the end."

Permit me to say, my dear friend, that I have read this passage with very great pain; because, while at the first glance it may seem to contain nothing but what is strictly orthodox, it appears to be drawn up as if purposely *to admit* of a doctrine which I am sure the author of "Scriptural Views of Holy Baptism," some years ago would have utterly repudiated. If the passage means that the regenerating grace of baptism will not suffice for *final* salvation, unless it grow and develope itself in a holy life, this is surely good and orthodox doctrine. But then, in this case, the passage, rigidly interpreted, contradicts itself. For then regenerating grace (so developed) *does* suffice for adults. Then you ought to have written, "This regenerating grace is sufficient for their salvation as infants, and *also suffices* for them as adults, if through the continual grace of God they with their whole hearts cleave to Him," &c. But as you have written the passage, and *in the sense in which alone it would obtain the acquiescence of those for whom you write it*, I fear it leaves a loophole for another doctrine, namely, that sufficient grace indeed is given in baptism to save infants, if they die; but that if they live, their salvation flows not from that source, to be perfected in succeeding sacraments; but from a gift perfectly distinct, which they can only receive through active faith, and their

own intellectual apprehension. And what is this but Pelagianism under a more subtle form? What is it in effect, and to all practical purposes, but to bring back the doctrine of Mr. Gorham or Mr. Goode? What is it but to *evade* (I fear notwithstanding your remonstrance I must use this word) an honest and distinct expression of the true doctrine, that by baptism we are grafted into Christ, that capability and right to enjoy all spiritual blessings is made ours by that act of grace; and that nothing more is needed than that through the same grace of God, fed and strengthened by succeeding sacraments, we should continue in the same state of salvation to our lives' end.*

I beseech you, my dear friend, to consider whether, though the best motives actuate you, it is justifiable to throw out suggestions such as these—to propose these ambiguous forms, which, being accepted in

* I wish I could interpret the passage in any way that would not seem disparaging to the grace of Holy Baptism. But certainly it seems to assume its inefficacy for the salvation of any except infants—as if its efficacy must needs be lost, or at least be overlaid by sin in future life, and be of no avail except through the influence of *some separate act of grace*, “which requires a conscious and responsible subject.” The words “continual grace of God” scarcely save the passage from this sad inference, because that, *under any circumstances*, is necessary to salvation. I must confess that I can gather no meaning from the passage which does not seem in some way to disparage the grace of which Scripture says, “It doth now save us,” and by it “we put on Christ,” and “are born again,” and are made “a new creation,” “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,” and of which the Catechism, in effect says, we are saved by it “if *we continue in the same* unto our lives' end.”

different meanings, only have the effect of concealing the truth? May I call upon you to remember that it is the truth of our Lord that is now at stake; and that at such a time it is our bounden duty to use language which cannot be mistaken? The pressure of the occasion is surely a reason why our language should be more exact, not an excuse for drawing up anew loose, and ambiguous statements.

You would fain disabuse the minds of those (if such there be) who think that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is injurious to holiness of life. I am heartily with you in this wish. But let me put it to your candour whether there is not a much better way of dealing with this imaginary fear; an example of which has been recently given us in one to whom we owe so much. The bishop of Exeter, in his letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, p. 21, asks, "What reasonable ground is there for apprehension that telling men the truth that they *were* regenerate in Baptism however they may since by wilful sins have lost that state of salvation, and thereby incurred 'greater damnation,' 'should lull them,' as your Grace assumes that it will, 'into a fallacious security?'" My Lord, I have been permitted to attain to years beyond the ordinary term of man's life, and your Grace is not, I believe, far short of it. Both of us have, during many of our past years been engaged in the pastoral charge of populous parishes. Now I solemnly aver that, during the whole of that time, during all my intercourse with any portion of my own people or others, among the many beds of sickness or of death by which I have stood, endeavouring however inadequately to instruct the ignorant, to

awaken the indifferent, aye, and to restrain the confident, I never met with a single instance of that 'fallacious security' in the regeneration of Baptism, which your Grace deems so likely to lull the sinner, and to make him heedless whether 'he have really those marks which accompany a new creature.' Of that heedlessness, too many were the instances I met with, but *not one* (sic) proceeding from the abuse of the doctrine of Baptism. Will your Grace forgive my asking whether your experience has been materially different?"

The question might indeed safely be asked. I believe that the experience of every clergyman in the land would substantially agree with the bishop's. For my own part I can say that mine agrees literally with it, even to the emphatic words, *not one*. Surely then the way to win over our mistaken brethren, is not by putting out ambiguous statements to be subscribed in different senses: but by boldly maintaining the holiness as well as the truthfulness of the doctrine itself; by showing how utterly vain and groundless are their fears—simply and singly the fruit of ignorance, not of reason.

And now, in conclusion, I must add one word on the grief and surprize which it has occasioned me, and many others besides me, that *you* should have taken this line in our present difficulties. You have been one of the foremost to lead us on to a higher appreciation of that "Church system," of which sacramental grace is the very life and soul. Both by precept and example you have been amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles. By your constant and common practice of administering

the sacrament of penance ; by encouraging everywhere, if not enjoining auricular confession, and giving special priestly absolution ; by teaching the propitiatory sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, as applicatory of the one sacrifice on the cross, and by adoration of Christ Really Present on the altar under the form of bread and wine ; by your introduction of Roman Catholic books “ adapted to the use of our Church ;” by encouraging the use of rosaries and crucifixes, and special devotions to our Lord, as e. g. to His Five Wounds ; by adopting language most powerfully expressive of our incorporation into Christ, as e. g. “ our being inebriated by the Blood of our Lord ;” by advocating counsels of perfection, and seeking to restore, with more or less fulness, the conventual or monastic life ;—I say, by the teaching and practice, of which this enumeration is a sufficient type and indication, you have done much to revive amongst us the system which may be pre-eminently called “ SACRAMENTAL.” And yet now, when, by God’s mercy to us, a great opportunity has occurred, of asserting and enforcing the very keystone of this system, and apart from which the whole must crumble away,—forgive me for speaking so plainly, —you seem to shrink from the front rank. You seem ready to hide yourself under soft assertions of truths “ which” it is said “ not six men in the Church of England will be found to deny,” and behind ambiguous statements which can be subscribed in different senses. I say again, pray forgive me for speaking out. I feel that the occasion calls for it. Why then do you take this course ? Why, when thousands have been led on to this point,

do you now seem to leave them? Are you afraid of persons going over to Rome? Do you think that the course which you are now pursuing will stay them? Surely this is a most mistaken notion. It is the very way to send them over. But at any rate, let us no longer have any concealments. We are now past the time for reserve and economy in such matters. While I am writing these lines a pamphlet reaches me entitled "the Morality of Tractarianism," which in a most startling way indicates the danger we are in of being accounted dishonest men. If then you will not join in obtaining an assertion of the full doctrine of baptismal grace, tell us what you will assert. From the position you have maintained amongst us, we have, I think, some right to demand it. Tell us at once what doctrines you hold; in what sense you subscribe the thirty-nine Articles; how far you will contend for what is Catholic, or to what extent you are prepared to make concessions to Protestantism. Hitherto, as you say, p. 226, we have been fighting side by side for the same holy truths. To me, such companionship, I trust, has been a great blessing, and if you will still fight *for the same truths*, by God's grace, you will not find us separate.

May He grant that it shall be so.

Believe me,

Ever your affectionate friend,

W. DODSWORTH.

May 7th, 1850.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN the foregoing Letter I have not entered on the subject of the "Royal Supremacy," to the consideration of which the greater part of your book is devoted—or rather, I should say, to the collection of "Ancient Precedents" by which that subject is illustrated. I would take this opportunity, however, of saying that you have not touched on the point which seems of all most needful to be considered, in order to arrive at just conclusions on that most important subject. I mean, THE AUTHORITY FROM WHICH A SPIRITUAL COURT IS TO DERIVE ITS JURISDICTION.

In my pamphlet entitled "the Gorham Case briefly considered," I offered a few remarks upon that subject,—endeavouring to show how the whole question of the Supremacy turned upon it. And since that, Mr. Allies has published a pamphlet, taking the same view of the matter, in which the whole subject is most ably and learnedly treated.* I must say, that the argument required some notice from you. If it be a sound argument, (as I must believe that it is, until it is shown to be otherwise,) the "ancient precedents" collected by you do not really bear upon the question now at issue in the English Church. You adduce these "precedents" for a twofold object, as you say, p. 16, to show "1. That the Church had a

* "The Royal Supremacy viewed in reference to the two Spiritual Powers of Order and Jurisdiction," by T. W. Allies, M. A. Rector of Launton, Oxon.

very definite line by which she yielded full obedience to temporal sovereigns, without giving up to them the trust committed to her. 2. She allowed and sanctioned at times interference on the part of the secular power, which some, (feeling very acutely existing evils) think it a forfeiture of her birthright to endure." On your first position there can be no doubt, and of course your precedents amply bear you out.

But in reference to your second position, assuming you to mean that "the existing evils" which we now so acutely feel, are the same in kind as may be found in ancient times, you seem to me *entirely to fail in your proofs*. Of course I do not mean to deny that the State has often tyrannised over the Church. Nor do I deny that some of the examples adduced by you indicate that there has been occasionally, though rarely, more subserviency in the authorities of the Church than can be justified. One would have thought, however, that such instances had been better adduced as *warnings* than as *examples*. But it appears to me that if your object be, as it seems to be, to shew, that the Church may safely, or without forfeiture of her birthright, allow to the State *jurisdiction* in matters purely spiritual; such as authority to decide on what her doctrines are, *all* your precedents, so far as I can see, tell against your position, and tend to show that the Church has never allowed such an interference as this.

W. D.





